

EXPLORING POLAR FRONTIERS: A HISTORICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA. By WILLIAM JAMES MILLS. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2003. ISBN 1-57607-422-6. Volume 1, A-L, xlv + 388 p.; Volume 2, M-Z, x + 409 p.; 20 maps and b&w illus., glossary, bib., index. Hardbound. US\$185.00.

This two-volume encyclopedia by William Mills resembles others on the subject of Antarctica (e.g., Stonehouse, 2002), but because it includes the Arctic as well, it stands alone among a variety of reference books on the polar regions of the Earth. The title page lists the six contributors, each involved in some aspects of polar exploration. More than 500 biographical, geographical, and subject entries range from "Abruzzi" to "Zavodovski Island." A chronology of expeditions includes several pre-16th century voyages and others up to modern times, the most recent being the first solo crossing of the Arctic Ocean by Børge Ousland in 2001. Many black-and-white photos, mostly borrowed from expedition literature, supplement the entries, and 20 maps help to remind readers of polar geography. Not all the geographic names on the maps are included as entries, nor should they be, but it takes some hunting to find some map names in the text. For example, the map of part of Antarctica on page xxvi locates "Patriot Hills," but there is no alphabetical entry or index entry for that name. By knowing where it is in a larger geographic sense (Ellsworth Land), one can find that "Patriot Hills" identifies "the only private camp and air facility on the Antarctic continent" (p. 212). In a minor inconsistency, the map of Antarctica on p. xxvi identifies Vernadskiy (Ukraine) station, but on p. xxx, which shows more detail of the Antarctic Peninsula, the same station is labeled as Faraday (U.K.). Clarification is made in the "Ukraine" entry, which explains that Faraday was transferred by the United Kingdom to Ukraine in 1996 and then renamed.

In reading most of the two volumes, and scanning other parts of them, I noted only the occasional error. In Table 1 "Some Airplane Firsts" (p. 7), an incorrect date (1955) is given for the first landing at the South Pole (October 31, 1956). Perhaps now that biographies of most major polar expedition members have been published, and expedition accounts are abundant in the literature, it is the right time for this book. Mills targets the general reader, who is reluctant to wade through details of particular expeditions and their participants, but just wants to look up a name and see quickly how it fits in with the overall expedition. I have a minor criticism with a book of this nature. Still, there is no other way to do it.

Each entry, whether it refers to a person (Lincoln Ellsworth), a place (Ellsworth Mountains), or an object (Ellsworth's airplane, *Polar Star*), can be found if it relates to polar exploration, but to put all the components into a story of an expedition, one must look up a number of individual entries. *Polar Star*, for example, is not included either as a main entry or in the index, but it is mentioned on p. 213 for its role in Ellsworth's 1935 expedition in Antarctica. On the other hand, the name of Ellsworth's expedition ship, *Wyatt Earp*, can be

found in the index under "Vessels." For fans of polar trivia, it is a matter of getting used to the level of trivia and indexing. The balloon used in Scott's *Discovery* expedition is mentioned in the entry "Balloons," and there is a photograph (p. 59) of the balloon raised on tethers on 4 February 1902, but its name (*Eva*) is not found in either the entry or the caption. However, considering how much detail could have been assembled into an encyclopedia on this subject, the 800-some pages have been more than generous. Mills has done an outstanding job in putting it all together and making it readable.

In addition to the main entries and the chronological list, supplements include a six-page glossary, covering mainly types of vessels or different forms of ice; a chronological list of polar expeditions by region; a selected bibliography (p. 741–767); and an index. The author has indeed satisfied the objective of the book, to produce an essentially complete listing of historical entries related to polar regions. The quality of reproduction of the photos and maps is excellent, and readers, ranging from polar historians to those interested in the subject of adventure in general, will find this book well worth the cost. It is a must for libraries as an invaluable reference book.

In general, the encyclopedia is a tribute to the author, who humbly states his place in life as "librarian and keeper of collections of the world's largest polar library at the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, England" (p. 797). This is indeed an understatement, for I gathered through the years I knew Mills that he was a walking encyclopedia of polar facts and figures, to say nothing of his mastery of the collection he supervised. This encyclopedia represents the transfer of his knowledge of the subject into print. It is with sorrow that I mention that William Mills passed away on 8 May 2004, after a prolonged illness, but it is satisfying to me that, after the enormous amount of time he put into the book, he was able to see the final product. His Encyclopedia will live forever.

REFERENCE

- STONEHOUSE, B. 2002. *Encyclopedia of Antarctica and the Southern Oceans*. Chichester: John Wiley.

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